

Message Text

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ACTION EB-08

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 IO-13 ISO-00 AGRE-00 CEA-01 CIAE-00

COME-00 DODE-00 FRB-03 H-01 INR-10 INT-05 L-03

LAB-04 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 CTME-00 AID-05 SS-15

STR-07 ITC-01 TRSE-00 ICA-11 SP-02 SOE-02 OMB-01

DOE-15 EUR-12 /136 W

-----045237 191910Z /53

R 182213Z MAY 78

FM AMEMBASSY MEXICO

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 0317

INFO USMISSION GENEVA

ALL USCONS MEXICO POUCH

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USMTN

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS:ETRD, MTN, MX

SUBJECT: US-MEXICO TRADE SUB-GROUP - MAY 12, 1978 MEETING

REF: MEXICO 08126 AND 08200

FOLLOWING IS FROM EMBASSY OFFICER'S NOTES; US DEL HAS NOT
CLEARED.

1. COMMENTS ON OFFERS. A - MEXICAN COMMENT. GARRIDO
SAID MEXICO WAS CONSIDERING DELETING SOME ITEMS FROM ITS
REQUEST, ESPECIALLY IN-BOND ITEMS WHICH HE CHARACTERIZED
AS PROVIDING ONLY MARGINAL ADDED VALUE TO THE MEXICAN
ECONOMY. ALSO REGARDING THE US OFFER HE SAID SEVERAL OF
THE ITEMS LISTED, MOSTLY 806/807 ITEMS HAD NOT BEEN RE-
QUESTED. THE US OFFER ALSO INCLUDES MANY ITEMS FOR WHICH
MEXICO IS NEITHER THE PRIMARY NOR EVEN A PRINCIPAL SUP-
PLIER AND HE DID NOT FEEL THAT MEXICO SHOULD BE CHARGED
IN FULL ON THESE ITEMS. GARRIDO ALSO SAID MEXICO WILL NOT
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MAKE A CONTRIBUTION TO THE MTN'S UNTIL THE TARIFF FORMULA
TAKES THE PARTICULAR NEEDS OF LDC'S INTO ACCOUNT. AS AN
ASIDE HE SAID THE US CONTINUES TO MAINTAIN UNFAIR TRADE
PRACTICES AND EXPRESSED HOPE FOR A FULLER US CONSIDERATION
OF THE SPECIAL AND DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT AFFORDED TO
LDC'S BY THE TOKYO ACCORDS. GARRIDO SAID MEXICO HAS MOVED
TO LIBERALIZE ITS TRADE BY ELIMINATING IMPORT PERMIT RE-

QUIREMENTS ON 20 ITEMS ON THE US REQUEST LIST AND WOULD LIKE TO GO FURTHER. HOWEVER, SEVERAL PROBLEMS EXIST. FOR INSTANCE, MEXICO HAS FOUND THAT ON SOME ITEMS WHICH NO LONGER REQUIRE IMPORT PERMITS US AND MEXICAN BUSINESS GROUPS HAVE BEEN UNDERBILLING TO AVOID THE INCREASED TARIFFS. PRACTICES LIKE THESE MAKE FURTHER LIBERALIZATION DIFFICULT.

B - US COMMENTS. THE US DEL STATED ITS PRIMARY INTERESTS TO BE SECURITY OF MARKET ACCESS - BEST AIDED IN THE MEXICAN CASE BY CONTINUED PERMIT REQUIREMENT REDUCTION AND TARIFF CONSOLIDATION - AND LIBERALIZATION OF MARKET ACCESS. US DEL NOTED THE US SUPPORTS IN GENERAL THE PRINCIPLE OF RELATIVE RECIPROCITY - AS OPPOSED TO FULL RECIPROCITY - WHEN DEALING WITH LDC'S AND THAT THIS IS FULLY IN LINE WITH US INTERNATIONAL OBLIGATIONS. HE CAUTIONED THE MEXICANS REGARDING THEIR GSP POSITION. SEVERAL OF THE ITEMS IN THE US LIST, INCLUDING IN-BOND PRODUCTS, REPRESENT SIGNIFICANT VALUE ADDED TO MEXICO. FURTHER IF MEXICO WERE REFUSING TO MAKE MTN REQUESTS BECAUSE OF GSP IT WAS MAKING A MISTAKE. THE MTN ROUTE ON OFFERS IS PREFERABLE TO THE US. AS A FINAL POINT MEXICO SHOULD BE FORTHCOMING IN ITS MTN CONTRIBUTION. THE US OFFER HAS BEEN ON THE TABLE FOR SOME TIME AND PRESSURE WAS BUILDING TO REDUCE THE OFFER. UNLESS OTHER PARTICIPANTS MAKE OFFERS SOON THE US MAY NOT BE ABLE TO MAINTAIN ITS POSITION.

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2. GATT. A - MEXICAN COMMENTS. THE MEXICAN DEL ASKED IF IT WAS NOT A FACT THAT THE US, JAPAN, AND SWITZERLAND AMONG OTHERS HAD JOINED THE GATT WITH A SPECIAL UNDERSTANDING ALLOWING THEM TO RESERVE ON AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTS. IF THIS WAS THE CASE, MEXICO SHOULD BE AFFORDED SIMILAR EXEMPTIONS. IT MIGHT EVEN BE POSSIBLE TO DEFINE A NEW SYSTEM OF DIFFERENTIAL TREATMENT FOR LDC'S.

B - US COMMENT. THE US DEL NOTED THAT SEVERAL LDC'S HAVE JOINED THE GATT WITHOUT SPECIAL ARRANGEMENTS AND HAVE DONE QUITE WELL. IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT MEXICO BY JOINING WOULD GAIN A NUMBER OF TRADE ADVANTAGES. BUT IF MEXICO COULD NOT MEET GATT'S STANDARDS IT WOULD BE INAPPROPRIATE TO JOIN.

3. BILATERAL ISSUES. ISSUES OF INTEREST TO MEXICO. A - RAILROAD CARS. GARRIDO OUTLINED THE MEXICAN PROBLEM. THE LOSS OF GSP ON RAILROAD CARS DUE TO COMPETITIVE NEED REQUIREMENTS RAISED IMPORT DUTIES ON THESE CARS FROM ZERO TO 18 PER CENT. THIS CAUSED TWO PROBLEMS FOR MEXICO: A SHORTRUN INABILITY TO FULFILL THEIR CONTRACT; AND A LONG TERM PROBLEM OF NOT BEING ABLE TO COMPETE EFFECTIVELY IN

THE US MARKET. MEXICO HAD TRIED TO CIRCUMVENT THE PROBLEM BY EXPORTING THE CARS AS PARTS - IN VARIOUS STAGES OF ASSEMBLY - BUT THE US TREASURY REFUSES TO ACCEPT THE MAIN-FRAME AS A PART. GARRIDO ASKED THE US DEL TO DO WHAT IT COULD TO GAIN RELIEF FOR MEXICO ON THIS ISSUE. SEVERAL OF THE PARTS USED IN MANUFACTURING THESE CARS ARE SUPPLIED BY THE US. CONGRESSMEN FROM AREAS WHICH ARE SUPPLIERS OF THESE PARTS HAVE BEEN LINED UP TO SUPPORT LEGISLATIVE RELIEF ON THIS ISSUE, BUT MEXICO ALSO NEEDS BACKING FROM THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION. TWO THINGS ARE NEEDED: THE RIGHT TO SHIP PARTS, INCLUDING MAINFRAMES TO THE US; AND LEGISLATION TO ELIMINATE THE TARIFFS UNTIL THERE IS AN MTN RESOLUTION OF THE ISSUE.

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LAB-04 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 CTME-00 AID-05 SS-15
STR-07 ITC-01 TRSE-00 ICA-11 SP-02 SOE-02 OMB-01
DOE-15 EUR-12 /136 W

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R 182213Z MAY 78
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US COMMENT. THE US DEL AGREED TO LEND ITS SUPPORT TO LEGISLATIVE RELIEF, NOTING HOWEVER THAT MEXICO SHOULD HAVE BEEN AWARE OF THE POSSIBLE PROBLEMS WHEN IT UNDERTOOK THE CONTRACT.

B - COUNTERVAILING DUTIES. MEXICAN COMMENT. GARRIDO MENTIONED BRIEFLY THE PROBLEM OF COUNTERVAILING DUTIES ON STEEL PLATE. HE SAID TAX REBATES ARE NOT AND HAVE NOT BEEN CONSIDERED A SUBSIDY BUT THE US HAS INTERPRETED THEM AS SUCH IN THE CASE OF STEEL PLATE EXPORTS.

US COMMENT. THE US DEL SAID NO COUNTERVAILING DUTIES WERE

IMPLIED BY THE US ACTION. THE QUESTION OF COUNTERVAILING DUTIES AND SUBSIDIES WOULD BE NEGOTIATED IN THE MTN.

C - REFERENCE AND TRIGGER PRICES. MEXICAN COMMENT. MEXICO WAS CONCERNED THAT US REFERENCE AND TRIGGER PRICES ON STEEL WOULD UNFAIRLY DISCRIMINATE AGAINST MEXICO. GARRIDO SAID THE MECHANISMS ARE BASED ON JAPANESE COSTS AND INCLUDE SEA LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TRANSPORT COSTS, GENERALLY TO A MAJOR USING CENTER. MEXICAN EXPORTS ENTER THE US OVERLAND AT EAGLE PASS AND MUST PAY ADDITIONAL HIGH FREIGHT CHARGES TO REACH CONSUMING CENTERS.

US COMMENT. US DEL SAID PRICING MECHANISM WERE DESIGNED AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO OTHER TRADE BARRIERS. US DEL TOOK NOTE OF THE PROBLEM BUT INSISTED THAT ANY RELIEF ON THIS ISSUE MUST COME FROM THE US TREASURY.

D - LIVE STOCK. MEXICAN COMMENT. MEXICAN DEL WAS CONCERNED ABOUT LEGISLATION BEING PROPOSED BY SEN. BENTSEN TO REVERSE SEASONAL CYCLE OF MEXICAN PRODUCT EXPORTS AND ESPECIALLY LIVE CATTLE SO AS TO REDUCE COMPETITION WITH US PRODUCERS. MEXICAN DEL SAID CYCLES ARE SET BY NATURE, JUST AS IN US, AND ADDED THAT MANY OF THE CATTLE EXPORTED TO US GO DIRECTLY TO FEED LOTS, THUS BENEFITING THE US.

US COMMENT. US DEL SAID LEGISLATION HAD BEEN PASSED IN BOTH HOUSES BUT IN DIFFERENT FORMS. BILL MUST NOW GO TO A CONFERENCE COMMITTEE. US DEL POINTED OUT THAT CARTER ADMINISTRATION IS OPPOSED TO THE BILL ON GROUNDS THAT IT IS INFLATIONARY.

E - SUGAR IMPORTS. MEXICAN COMMENTS. GARRIDO COMPLAINED THAT US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE MAINTAINS THAT IMPORTS INTERFERE WITH IMPLEMENTATION OF SUGAR PRICE CONTROLS. HE FELT THAT 2.7 CENTS PER POUND TARIFF - DOUBLE THE OLD TARIFF - WAS EXCESSIVE AND HARMFUL TO MEXICAN EXPORTS. HE WAS ALSO CONCERNED ABOUT THE STATUS OF OTHER MEXICAN PRODUCTS THAT CONTAIN SUGAR.

US COMMENT. US DEL SAID SUGAR WAS COMPLEX ISSUE BUT EX-LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PRESSED HOPE THAT THE ISA WOULD PROVIDE BOTH A DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL SOLUTION TO THE PROBLEM.

F - ITC. MEXICAN COMMENT. GARRIDO ASKED ABOUT USG POSITION ON ITC ACTIONS ON COPPER, ZINC AND MOLDS. HE ALSO WANTED TO KNOW IF THE US HAD PLANS TO ASSIST NON-COMPETITIVE INDUSTRIES TO CONVERT TO OTHER PRODUCTS. THE MEXICAN DEL COMMENTED THAT ITC INVESTIGATIONS CONSTITUTE AN UNFAIR TRADE PRACTICE IN THAT THEY INHIBIT TRADE DURING THE INVESTIGATION. HE FELT THAT MANY US FIRMS BRING THESE ACTIONS BECAUSE THEY KNOW OF THE INHIBITING EFFECTS. HE SUGGESTED THAT US IMPLEMENT A SYSTEM OF PENALTIES TO APPLY AGAINST THOSE FIRMS THAT BRING UNFOUNDED REVIEWS.

US COMMENT. THE ITC PROCEDURES ARE FAIR AND WELL DEFINED. NO EXPORTING FIRM NEED FEEL INHIBITED IF IT IS WITHIN THE SET REGULATIONS. FURTHER, THE ITC PROCEDURE PROVIDES FOR A FULL AIRING OF THE COMPLAINT IN A NON POLITICAL ATMOSPHERE. THE ALTERNATIVE WOULD BE TO BRING THIS ISSUE UP BEFORE CONGRESS WHERE POLITICAL PRESSURE WOULD LIKELY ELICIT MORE STRINGENT TRADE RESTRICTIONS. HE SUGGESTED THAT PENALTIES IN THE FORM THE MEXICAN DEL HAD SUGGESTED WOULD CLOSE THE SYSTEM TO SMALL OPERATORS. REGARDING INDUSTRIAL CONVERSION, LANDE SAID THE USG HAD PROGRAMS IN THIS AREA AND THAT SOME HAD BEEN EFFECTIVE. LABOR GROUPS, HOWEVER, CONTINUE TO VIEW THESE PROGRAMS AS "BURIAL INSURANCE" AND GENERALLY ARE OPPOSED TO THEM. US DEL NOTED THAT IT WAS NOT THE INTENTION OF THE USG TO CLOSE DOWN SO-CALLED INEFFICIENT INDUSTRIES BY RETRAINING WORKERS.

4. BILATERAL ISSUES. ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE US.

A - CATTLE PROBLEMS. US COMMENT. US DEL NOTED SEVERAL US EXPORT PRODUCTS FACE RESTRICTIONS IN THE MEXICAN MARKET. PRODUCTS SUCH AS US LEATHER (GENERALLY OF MUCH BETTER QUALITY THAN MEXICAN DOMESTIC MATERIALS), VISCERA (WHICH

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LAB-04 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 CTME-00 AID-05 SS-15
STR-07 ITC-01 TRSE-00 ICA-11 SP-02 SOE-02 OMB-01
DOE-15 EUR-12 /136 W

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R 182213Z MAY 78

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COULD ADD LOW COST PROTEIN TO MEXICAN DIETS), BREEDER CATTLE, AND CERTAIN RESTAURANT GRADES OF BEEF WOULD BENEFIT THE MEXICAN ECONOMY. IT WAS SUGGESTED THAT US CATTLEMEN WOULD VERY MUCH LIKE TO HAVE THE CONTROL OVER US IMPORT PERMITS THAT THE MEXICAN CATTLEMEN'S ASSOCIATION HAS.

MEXICAN COMMENT. GARRIDO SAID SOME OF THE PRODUCTS LISTED WERE LUXURY ITEMS. SPECIAL LEATHERS FOR INSTANCE COULD AND IN FACT WERE BEING IMPORTED FROM EUROPE. REGULAR GRADES OF LEATHER WERE BROUGHT IN UNDER QUOTA AND ONLY AFTER DOMESTIC PRODUCTS WERE USED. HE SAID MEXICO'S IMPORTS OF LEATHER WOULD BE 30 PER CENT HIGHER THIS YEAR THAN LAST. THE US QUOTA IS 2,080,000 HIDES. IF THIS IS INSUFFICIENT TO MEXICAN NEEDS THE QUOTA WILL BE INCREASED. RAMOS CANTORAL DESCRIBED THE ROLE OF THE MEXICAN CATTLEMAN'S ASSOCIATION IN IMPORT POLICY FORMULATION AS CONSULTATIVE, RATHER THAN CONTROLLING.

B - AUTO DECREE. US COMMENT. US DEL SAID THE AUTO DECREE IS AMONG THE MOST TROUBLING TRADE PROBLEMS BETWEEN THE US LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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AND MEXICO. THE DECREE CAN BE SEEN AS A MEXICAN EFFORT TO RATIONALIZE PRODUCTION BUT THAT IT CAN ALSO BE SEEN AS NEW TRADE BARRIER. THIS KIND OF LEGISLATION WILL CERTAINLY INCREASE US POLITICAL PRESSURE IN THE TRADE AREA, ESPECIALLY IF THE CONCEPT IS CARRIED INTO OTHER FIELDS.

MEXICAN COMMENT. GARRIDO SAID IT WAS HIS UNDERSTANDING THAT THIS ISSUE HAD BEEN RESERVED TO THE INDUSTRIAL SUBGROUP OF THE CONSULTATIVE MECHANISM. HE WAS NOT PREPARED TO DISCUSS THE ISSUE. (NOTE: BITTNER OF THE US DEL SAID NOTHING IN THE CONSULTATIVE MECHANISM MEETING SUGGESTED THE TOPIC WAS TO BE DEALT WITH EXCLUSIVELY IN THAT GROUP.)

C - ALCOHOL EXCISE TAX. US COMMENT. THE US DEL COMPLAINED ABOUT THE RECENTLY IMPOSED MEXICAN EXCISE TAX ON ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGE IMPORTS REFERRING TO IT AS DISCRIMINATORY. ACTIONS OF THIS SORT DAMAGE THE ATMOSPHERE AND WOULD AFFECT THE MTN OFFERS ON TEQUILA BOTH IN BOTTLE AND IN BULK. A RECENT DIARIO OFFICIAL HAD INDICATED FURTHER RESTRICTIONS ON WINE IMPORTS. THE MEXICANS WERE ASKED TO COMMENT.

MEXICAN COMMENT. GARRIDO SAID THE TAX WAS STILL UNDER ADVISEMENT. HE ALSO NOTED THAT THE TAX DID NOT DISCRIMINATE AGAINST THE US BUT APPLIES TO ALL EXPORTERS TO THE MEXICAN MARKET. UNDER THE PROVISIONS OF THE TAX THE US SHOULD FARE BETTER THAN OTHER EXPORTERS BECAUSE OF ITS PROXIMITY. GARRIDO SAID IF THERE WAS TO BE A REDUCTION IN THE WINE QUOTA THE US WOULD BE INCLUDED. HOWEVER, HE SAID THE EFFECT WOULD BE MINIMAL AS THE US HAS NOT MET ITS EXISTING QUOTA. GARRIDO HOPED THAT SOME ACCOMMODATION COULD BE REACHED WITH REGARD TO MEXICO'S TEQUILA EXPORTS.

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D - TOMATOES. US COMMENT. US DEL SAID THERE ARE A NUMBER OF BORDER TRADE PROBLEMS IN THE AGRICULTURAL FIELD. THE MOST PRESSING IS TOMATOES. THE USG HAD RECEIVED SEVERAL REPRESENTATIONS FROM FLORIDA GROWERS CONCERNING AN INFLUX OF MEXICAN WINTER TOMATOES. THE COMPLAINTS CENTERED ON THE ALLEGATIONS THAT THE MEXICAN CROP WAS DEPRESSING THE MARKET, BEING SOLD, OR RATHER DUMPED, AT BELOW COST AND NOT BEING PROPERLY CONTROLLED FOR GRADE OR SIZE. US DEL SUGGESTED THAT A SUB-GROUP BE SET UP TO WORK ON AGRICULTURAL PROBLEMS.

MEXICAN COMMENT. THE MEXICAN DEL STATED THAT THE MEXICAN SHARE OF THE WINTER MARKET - THE ONLY SEASON IN WHICH MEXICO IS COMPETITIVE - HAS BEEN RUNNING AT 48 PER CENT FOR THE LAST THREE YEARS. ALSO, 80 PER CENT OF THE FLORIDA TOMATOES ARE SOLD EAST OF THE MISSISSIPPI WHILE 75 PER CENT OF THE MEXICAN CROP IS SOLD IN THE WEST. THE MEXICAN DEL SAID CROPS HAD BEEN GOOD THIS YEAR BUT DENIED THAT THERE HAD BEEN ANY INDISCRIMINATE SALES OR SALES BELOW COST. THE MEXICANS AGREED THAT A SUB-GROUP SHOULD BE SET UP TO EXPLORE WAYS TO MANAGE THE MARKET BETTER AND TO DISCUSS OTHER AGRICULTURAL ISSUES. THEY FELT THAT US CROP FORECASTING PROCEDURES AND TECHNOLOGY COULD USEFULLY BE BROUGHT TO BEAR ON THE PROBLEM. THOMPSON

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TRADE, MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 18 may 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978MEXICO08262
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: N/A
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780211-0984
Format: TEL
From: MEXICO MTN
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t19780545/aaaablxtel
Line Count: 374
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: d5c7309b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION EB
Original Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 7
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 78 MEXICO 8126
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 05 may 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: N/A
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 2652265
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: US-MEXICO TRADE SUB-GROUP - MAY 12, 1978 MEETING
TAGS: ETRD, MX, US, MTN
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/d5c7309b-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014